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WASHINGTON, DC—U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio announced today that the Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) received a \$500,000 low-interest loan to support small businesses in rural Lane County from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development. The loan will supplement an existing revolving loan fund, which has helped rural small businesses create or retain almost 300 jobs since the inception of the program in 1997.

"I know how successful these loans have been in Lane County to spur development in rural areas," DeFazio said. "This additional funding will allow the LCOG continue this important work." DeFazio's office served as a point of contact for the LCOG during the application process, submitting a joint letter to the Oregon USDA supporting the loan application along with Senator Ron Wyden and Senator Gordon Smith.

Based on past performance, the new loan will generate about eight new loans to small businesses and will lead to the creation or retention of at least 30 rural jobs, according to the LCOG. The loan program re-lends funds at market rates in rural Lane County to support businesses or community development.

"This is a great tool to help stimulate economic development and create jobs in rural Lane County," said Stephen J. Dignam, LCOG Program Manager. Loans have been made to businesses ranging from auto body shops to plant nurseries, according to Dignam. Eligible businesses can borrow up to \$150,000, with the average loan being \$85,843.

"This investment further supports USDA's goal to create jobs and improve economic opportunities in rural communities," said Mark Simmons, USDA Rural Development State Director in Oregon.

The loan is through the Intermediary Relending Program (IRP) of USDA Agriculture Development. The new loan will be LCOG's sixth round of IRP funding and will increase LCOG's total IRP program to almost \$4.4 million.